

BX

6334

9

.Fol

Fox

The Unfolding  
of  
Baptist  
Doctrines

*Pract. Theol.*

*Pract. Theol.*

*Class*

*Book*

University of Chicago Library

GIVEN BY

*The American Library*

*Besides the main topic this book also treats of*

*Subject No.*

*On page*

*Subject No.*

*On page*

64

# **THE UNFOLDING OF BAPTIST DOCTRINE**

**NORMAN FOX, D. D.**

**AMERICAN BAPTIST  
PUBLICATION SOCIETY**



# AMERICAN BAPTIST PUBLICATION SOCIETY

*Philadelphia,*.....

*We send herewith a copy of*

THE UNFOLDING OF BAPTIST DOCTRINE. By  
NORMAN FOX, D. D. 12mo, 39 pages. Price, 10  
cents. American Baptist Publication Society,  
1420 Chestnut Street, Philadelphia.

*Please send marked copy of the paper containing review to above  
address.*

A. J. ROWLAND, Secretary



THE  
UNFOLDING OF BAPTIST DOCTRINE

AN ADDRESS TO THE STUDENTS  
OF THE  
**Drew (M. E.) Theological Seminary**  
MADISON, N. J.

BY  
NORMAN FOX, D. D.

PHILADELPHIA  
**American Baptist Publication Society**  
1420 Chestnut Street





THE UNFOLDING OF BAPTIST DOCTRINE

---

I APPRECIATE, my dear brethren, the honor your professor of church history, my friend, Doctor Faulkner, has conferred upon me in asking me to speak to you on some phase of Baptist history. I appreciate the kindly greeting extended by your honored president, Doctor Buttz, and the words of praise that have been spoken of the denomination to which I belong. And let me congratulate you on the advantages which you are enjoying as students in this institution, whose magnificent campus of a hundred acres is adorned by a half-score of stately edifices, whose library, beautifully housed, is so large and rich, and whose faculty is so noble a group of Christian scholars. On the work done in Drew Theological Seminary I congratulate not only the Methodist brotherhood, but also the whole church of Christ.

In dealing to-day with Baptist history I may touch on some points where Baptists and Methodists differ. Possibly that is what you desire.

If a Roman Catholic were speaking to us, he could say many things on which we should agree with him; but we should not unlikely prefer that he give us his views on the confessional or the infallibility of the pope. And so you may be mentally saying to me: Just what is it that you Baptists believe? On what grounds do you adhere to this and to that usage?

It is certainly well that we should inform ourselves as to the beliefs of our brethren of other communions. If as students of ecclesiastical history we dig into old records to ascertain what was held by this and that minor sect a thousand years ago, surely we may properly ask what is believed by the great Christian bodies in existence right around us.

A wider knowledge may give us a better opinion of each other. If a Mohammedan or a Brahmin were to address us to-day, I do not say that any of us would be converted to his views, but we should not unlikely find that he had much more to say on his side than we have supposed. And so between different bodies of Christians familiarity may breed respect.

Should we become engaged in controversy with a Roman Catholic or a Lutheran, it would be a

bad break for us to charge him with holding what he does not hold, or to use against him an argument for which he had a ready answer. And so, should a Baptist and a Methodist contemplate a discussion, it would be well for each to familiarize himself with the strong points of the other.

But there is a pleasanter view of the matter. There is a growing desire for Christian union. Now in many a hamlet there are two congregations, a Methodist and a Baptist, where one would suffice, and any one of you as a Methodist preacher may be called on to take part in framing a platform on which two such bodies can unite. But in submitting to a Baptist a plan of union you must embody therein nothing which will be contrary to his principles. Wisely to draw up such a scheme you must study his conscientious scruples. To do away with sectarian differences we must inform ourselves on what those differences are based. Let us therefore confer with perfect unreserve on the points in dispute between us.

The Baptist denomination has existed on this continent for two centuries and a half. The First Baptist Church of Providence, R. I., claims to have been organized in 1638. In Great Britain it

arose somewhat earlier. Of those English worthies who, during the reign of James I., were driven into exile in Holland,—one company of whom, migrating to this country, settled at Plymouth,—there were some who, coming into contact with the *Doopsgesinden*, or Mennonites, of the Netherlands, adopted Baptist views, and, returning to England about 1611, became, as it is generally reckoned, the first congregation of the existing English Baptist body.

There were indeed Baptists in England at a still earlier period. Some were burned for their faith in the reign of Henry VIII., but it is questioned whether they formed a succession of congregations. They may have been individuals from the Continent, where, from the North Sea to the Danube, there were Baptist churches from the earlier part of the sixteenth century.

And be it observed, the Baptist body antedates the Lutheran Reformation. In the year 1100, or soon after,—that is, nearly as long before Luther as Luther was before our time,—we find in France large numbers of followers of Peter De Bruys and Henry of Lausanne, who, it is conceded, were essentially what are now called Baptists. We also get glimpses of congregations of similar faith in

other lands and still earlier centuries. Scholars who are not Baptists have declared the origin of the Baptist brotherhood to be "lost in the depths of antiquity." It is held by some that, had we full records, we should find a practically unbroken succession of adherents to Baptist principles through all the Christian centuries.

But we will start to-day with the Baptists of the sixteenth century, from which time we have connected records. What was the fundamental principle of those Baptists? It was that *salvation comes by faith alone*, independently of baptism and all other ecclesiastical rites; that it is the direct work of the Holy Spirit, apart from all priestly ministrations. This teaching sounds commonplace now, when so many Christian bodies have come to hold it, but in that earlier time it was a doctrine novel, startling, revolutionary.

The theory of Rome was that the church is the golden conduit through which the water of life comes down from God to man, that regeneration and the completion of salvation come only through baptism and other ecclesiastical rites, and thus that apart from the ministrations of the church there is no salvation. It was held that beneath these ceremonies there was a transforming power. For

instance, it was declared that the bread of the church Supper had a direct spiritual effect upon the soul of the recipient. Even the unconscious infant was brought to the church table under the idea that, as it was strengthened by its mother's milk without intelligent action of its own, so through the bread of the church it would in like unconsciousness receive an increase of spiritual life. This, which is still practised in the Eastern Church, was the usage of the Latin Church in the earlier centuries.

But the Baptists declared that the bread and wine had no inherent efficacy, that one could be religiously affected by them only indirectly, as was the pious Israelite by the lamb and bitter herbs of the Passover meal, and that church ceremonies in general are merely emblems of a spiritual state already attained without their intervention through the immediate work of the Holy Spirit. And this doctrine was unfolded with some striking results.

1. In the first place, it led to a change in the subjects of baptism, *i. e.*, to the giving of the rite only to believers.

It was held in the medieval church that it was in baptism itself that one was born anew and

brought into the spiritual life. The baptized person was said to be "christened," that is, *made a Christian* thereby. It was believed that one was passive in the new birth as in natural generation, that the soul could be purified in baptism without volition, as the body of an infant or an unconscious sick man may be washed without his intelligent assent. It was on this idea that not only were babes baptized, but Charlemagne and other Christian warriors ordered conquered heathen into the baptismal rivers by the tens of thousands, and Shakespeare has Shylock sentenced to be baptized, —that is, to be made a Christian *willy-nilly*. Now the conquered heathen, rising from his forced immersion, could splutteringly swear by his gods that he was not a Christian after all, and the dogged silence of the Jew who had submitted to baptism rather than the loss of his teeth might leave a question whether he had indeed been spiritually transformed. But the little infant could make no sign, and thus, although the forcible baptism of adults became obsolete, the rite was still given to unconscious babes.

But the Baptists declared that, as the bread of the church Supper could have no spiritual effect save in the intelligent reception thereof, and thus

should not be given to the mere infant, the baptism of an unconscious subject was in like manner unreasonable. They affirmed that one was christened—made a Christian—only by faith, that baptism was merely the symbol of a new birth which had already taken place, and therefore should be administered only on an intelligent profession of faith. As a uniform is put on a man, not to make him a soldier, but because he is already a soldier; as a coronation ceremony will not make one a king, but can merely declare him a king; so the Baptists asserted that baptism does not make a man a Christian, and should be given only as a token that one has already entered the new life.

If baptism is indeed a "christening," the Roman Catholics were right in giving it to babes; but if it is not a christening, it can properly be given only to believers. The irresistible logic of the situation is disclosed in the utter confusion of thought and the instability of attitude which appears among evangelical Pedobaptists. In their struggles to reconcile their theory and their practice they continually tend to revert to the doctrine of the Roman Catholics or to go forward to the position of the Baptists.

The late Dr. John Hall, of New York, in a plea



for infant baptism commends a mother who, making the baptism of her child "a real thing," says to the little one, "When you were a little baby papa and I offered you to the Saviour; *he took you as his when you were baptized*, and you are to feel this always." Now this implies that Christ had not taken the child as his before it was baptized. It is, in fact, the High Church doctrine of the Anglican catechism concerning "my baptism wherein I was made a member of Christ, the child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven," the Roman Catholic doctrine that an unbaptized infant is outside the pale of salvation.

Doctor Hall says further :

There are thousands of children who were not born in America, but who are growing up to be American citizens. They came here in infancy. They chose nothing in the matter. Their parents chose, and brought them into this American life. . . . The process in the church is the counterpart of the process in natural life.

Now this eminent Presbyterian did not believe in baptismal regeneration ; but the exigencies of his case betrayed him into an actual support of the Roman Catholic doctrine that one may be made a Christian without any volition of his own, even when he "chose nothing in the matter," that his

parents may decide whether he shall or shall not be a child of God as they can determine whether he shall or shall not be an American citizen. When a Presbyterian clergyman baptizes an infant you will be almost sure to hear him preach baptismal regeneration. Turn to the manual for infant baptism in almost any evangelical denomination and see if you do not find "High Church" doctrine in its strongest form.

In practice, however, their tendency is the contrary, namely, to give to infant baptism no meaning whatever. Ask a Presbyterian minister whether Deacon Blank's graceless sons are church-members, and he will say "No," though he himself "christened" them in their infancy. Our Presbyterian and Congregational friends make no difference whatever between unconverted persons as baptized or unbaptized. They would not assume to "discipline" for heresy or immorality the former any sooner than the latter, while they will hope for the salvation of the unbaptized, the son of the Baptist or the Quaker, as earnestly as that of the baptized, the child of Presbyterian or Episcopalian. To them it is not baptism but "profession" which is the door of the visible church. They treat infant baptism as an absolute nullity.

To the Roman Catholic, baptism means something ; it is that in which regeneration takes place. It means something to the Baptist ; it is a token that regeneration has already taken place. To the evangelical Pedobaptist it means neither of these ; it means practically nothing at all.

That the evangelical churches find no significance in infant baptism is shown by the fact that they are steadily abandoning it. In the Presbyterian Church of the United States, in the opening years of the nineteenth century, the number of baptisms of infants to a thousand communicants was nearly two hundred ; in the closing years, less than thirty. At this rate the present century will see the extinction of the practice. Among Methodists and Congregationalists, who are less conservative than our Presbyterian friends, the usage is undergoing a still more rapid obsolescence. But among Romanists, High Church Lutherans, and High Church Anglicans, there is no such falling off. Why the difference ? It is because the practice of infant baptism is an outcome of the doctrine of baptismal regeneration, and in this alone can it find a warrant. When that doctrine is abandoned the usage must die. Our Presbyterian brethren, though slow, are logical, and are steadily

progressing toward the Baptist position that, since regeneration is not wrought in baptism, the rite can properly be given only as a token that the subject is already regenerate. What the Presbyterians are slowly coming to see, the Baptists recognized at the first.

2. But the giving of baptism only on profession of faith involved a radical change in the constitution of the church.

In the Jewish nation every son was circumcised, and thus the religious and civic corporations were made one. But when John the Baptist, and the apostles after him, preached the new kingdom, they baptized into it only those who gave token of repentance. The Christian church was not a continuation of the Jewish commonwealth ; it was made to consist, not of all the people, but only of a separated few. In like manner the Baptists, giving baptism to none but credible believers, left the non-professing multitude outside the church, making the church a body distinct from the community at large.

Though in the Roman Catholic theory the church is composed of regenerate persons, the belief that all are regenerated who are baptized, and the consequent giving of baptism to all who

are born into the community, makes church-members of all the people, so that, as in the Jewish commonwealth, the church comprises the whole population, and there is no outward distinction between the church and the world.

And the Presbyterian theory arrives at the same result. The Westminster Confession (25 : 2) makes the church consist, not of the converted alone, but of believers, "together with their children." Though the child of the saint grow up a worldling, even an atheist, he is in the church all the same. I suppose that Col. Robert G. Ingersoll, baptized in infancy into the Presbyterian church, died a member thereof in good and regular standing. This must have been the case with Aaron Burr. An unconverted person in a Baptist church is there in violation of the Baptist theory, but the Westminster doctrine is that the church may properly contain confessed unbelievers. And in colonial New England, when only church-members could vote, Hophni and Phinehas insisted upon their "vested rights" as lively stones in the spiritual temple, nay, demanded that their children also be baptized in order to have a voice in civil affairs. The "Half-way Covenant" was a logical outcome of infant baptism. Under the West-

minster, as under the Roman theory, the church swallows the world, and loses its existence as a separate body.

It is claimed that children may be baptized as a dedication to Christ. But what is such a dedication? It is simply an engagement to do all possible to lead the child himself to choose Christ on coming to years of intelligent action. But should we not as servants of Christ make this promise regarding all the children we know, and so "dedicate" to the Saviour all who are born into the community? Why might not a missionary thus dedicate a whole heathen tribe to Christ, and baptize them all at the start? But the child baptized and brought into the church by dedication is not thereby regenerated, and so this theory makes the confessedly ungodly to be church-members with all rights as such.

Some would practise infant baptism on the ground that "of such is the kingdom of heaven." These words, however, apply to the babes not of the godly alone, but of atheists and heathen as well, and thus would bring the whole human race into the church.

Our Presbyterian friends claim a warrant for infant baptism in the text, "The promise is to you

and to your children." But Peter adds, "and to all that are afar off," that is, the heathen world, and if the "children," then all men should be baptized.

There is no theory of infant baptism which will not give church-membership to unconverted and converted alike, making the church, the bride of Christ, to consist in part—even the greater part—of the confessedly impenitent, wiping out all visible distinction between the church and the world.

Thus the drawing of a line between the church and the world, between the converted and the unconverted, was an unfolding of Baptist doctrine. When the Baptists, by giving baptism only to believers, made the church a body separate from the community at large, they presented a theory of the church radically different from that not only of the Romanists, but of the Lutherans and the Reformed also, a theory novel, nay, revolutionary.

3. For this Baptist theory of the constitution of the church was more than a trivial ecclesiastical detail; it involved one of the most stupendous of political changes, the separation of Church and State, with the doing away of religious persecution.

When, through the baptism of all the children of the community, the church-members and the

citizens, the civic and ecclesiastical corporations, are the same, the public assembly can deal with religious and political questions alike, and the public officials enforce both religious and political ordinances. Not so, however, when the boundaries of Church and State are made to differ.

If a church migrated in a body to an unsettled region, forming there a new colony, the meetings for church business and town business could be the same, the one assembly administering religious and civic affairs. If all the children born to the colonists were baptized into the church this system could continue. But if this were a Baptist colony, some of the children growing up unconverted could not be admitted to the church and then, since these must be accorded their civic rights all the same, it would be necessary to have two assemblies, to make a distinct separation between religious and municipal functions, remanding the former entirely to the church, and reserving the latter for the town meeting alone. Under the Baptist theory, the church must confine itself entirely to religious affairs, the civic corporation entirely to things civil.

Again, when the Church and the State were one and the same body, the army and the constabulary



were the servants of the Church as well as of the State, and the Church could order a man to be imprisoned and even put to death for contemning its rites and doctrines, as the State could order his punishment for disturbance of the peace or for treason. But when, by giving baptism only to believers, the Church is separated from the State, it can no longer use the powers of the State, but must defend and propagate its doctrines by moral forces alone.

Certain rationalistic writers have declared that earnest religious belief necessarily leads to persecution. But this can be true only where the church controls the courts and the police. The Mohammedans may spread their faith by the sword, but not the Quakers, who refuse to bear arms. There certainly was no danger of persecution by those earlier Baptists who objected to serving not only as soldiers, but even as magistrates ; and persecution is equally impossible under the general Baptist theory which leaves no more civil power to the church than to a literary club.

The Baptist may have the persecuting spirit, for that is but a part of our imperfect human nature. Stung to fury because men will not accept his ideas, he may ache to lay violent hands upon

them ; but a Baptist church cannot persecute, for the constable will not do its bidding. As the American Indian, before proceeding to get drunk, puts away his knife and tomahawk that in his delirium he may not injure his squaw or his fellow-revelers, so a Baptist church, however strong numerically, will not persecute, for it has deliberately and completely deprived itself of the power so to do.

The Baptists have often received from their brethren words of most generous commendation because they first preached the separation of Church and State. But how happens it that the Baptists were the first to declare this great principle? Were they intellectually so far superior to all others that they might be expected to discern profound truths of which other churches were ignorant? Nay, this doctrine was simply a logical unfolding of the fundamental Baptist principle. While the baptism of infants, with the consequent identification of the religious and civic corporations, enabled the State Churches to retain the power of the sword, the baptism of none but believers separated Church and State, and left the church no weapon but simple argument.

And it is this which has enabled Baptists alone

to be consistent in their teaching on this matter. Religious persecution involves so many practical absurdities that wise men in other churches have decried it. But these have gone by no clear principle. They would proscribe only Papists, or only deniers of the divinity of Jesus, or only atheists, but they have not renounced the abstract right to persecute. The Baptists, however, by the logical development of their fundamental tenet, have always declared that the State has no right to take cognizance of the religious errors even of the atheist or idolater. The Baptists have always denounced religious persecution in and of itself, and that simply because they were Baptists.

4. Comparable in glory to the diffusion of the doctrine of the separation of Church and State was the spread of another teaching, which, again, was but an unfolding of the Baptist principle, namely, the doctrine of the salvation of all who die in infancy.

The baptism of infants was unknown to the apostolic church. Says Neander :<sup>1</sup> "We have all reason for not deriving infant baptism from apostolic institution." Says Olshausen :<sup>2</sup> "The baptism of children, the church for wise reasons intro-

---

<sup>1</sup> "Ch. Hist."

<sup>2</sup> "Com.," Matt. 3.

duced subsequently." Says Schaff :<sup>1</sup> "The apostolic origin of infant baptism is denied not only by Baptist but also by many Pedobaptist divines." How then came baptism to be given to infants? It was from the doctrine of baptismal regeneration, the belief that one was christened—made a Christian—in baptism, and only in baptism, so that one dying unbaptized was lost. It is true that evangelical Pedobaptists of to-day offer other pleas for the usage, but these are after-thoughts. Ask a Roman Catholic, or other high church theologian, why an infant is to be baptized, and he will answer that it is to save the child's soul, and in so saying he will be giving the original ground for the practice.

The history of infant baptism is one of the darkest, gloomiest chapters in the annals of the church. Viewed in connection with the origin of the usage, the sprinkling of an infant is a repulsive sight, for in the light of history it is a declaration that this beautiful little creature needs a church ceremony to insure its salvation, that if it died without having some drops of water sprinkled on its forehead it would go down to eternal night. All through the Middle Ages, when a woman was

---

<sup>1</sup> "Ch. Hist.," Vol. I., p. 469.

in the perils of childbirth and through delay in parturition there was fear that the child might die before delivery, the bodily pangs of the poor mother were as nothing compared to her mental agony at the awful thought that her poor little infant, dying before it could be baptized, would be eternally lost. It is more than a strange and revolting direction, it is a revelation of the anguish of tens of thousands of parents, that we find in a decree of the Synod of Cologne in 1280: "If it be feared that the infant will die before birth, but the head has appeared, some one present shall pour water upon it saying, 'I baptize thee,' " etc.

Lecky, in his "History of Rationalism," says:

According to the unanimous belief of the early church, all who were external to Christianity were doomed to eternal damnation, and therefore even the new-born infant was subject to the condemnation, unless baptism had united it to the church. . . The whole body of the Fathers, without exception or hesitation, pronounced that all infants who died unbaptized were excluded from heaven. All through the Middle Ages we trace the influence of this doctrine in the innumerable superstitious rites which were devised as substitutes for regular baptism. Nothing, indeed, can be more curious, nothing more deeply pathetic, than the record of the many ways by which the terror-stricken mothers attempted to evade the awful sentence of their church.

Sometimes the baptismal water was sprinkled upon the womb ; sometimes the still-born child was baptized in hopes that the Almighty would antedate the ceremony. These and many similar practices continued all through the Middle Ages, in spite of every effort to extirpate them, and the severest censures were unable to persuade the people that they were entirely ineffectual. For the doctrine of the church had wrung the mother's heart with an agony that was too poignant even for that submissive age to bear. Weak and superstitious women, who never dreamed of rebelling against the teaching of their clergy, could not acquiesce in the perdition of their offspring, and they vainly attempted to escape from the dilemma by multiplying superstitious practices, or by attributing to them a more than orthodox efficacy.

Nor was it only the Roman Catholics who believed in the damnation of infants. The Lutherans, in the Augsburg Confession, condemn the Baptists for affirming that children are saved without baptism (*"Damnant Anabaptistas qui . . . affirmant pueros sine baptismo salvos fieri"*), and the favorite poet of Presbyterian Scotland, in his "Tam O'Shanter," names among objects from hell,

Twa span-lang, wee, unchristened bairns.

The Westminster Confession, in declaring that "elect infants dying in infancy" are saved, implies that non-elect infants dying in infancy are lost.

This was explicitly taught by some of the framers of that creed.

But the Baptists, in declaring that the believer was saved before baptism, and therefore independently thereof, naturally joined thereto the teaching that the infant dying unbaptized was saved. In the records of the trials of Baptists of the sixteenth century, we find again and again the question asked them regarding their refusal to give baptism to infants: "But would you let them go to hell?" It was impossible for men of that day to conceive of the salvation of an infant dying unbaptized. But each time the answer of the Baptist confessors is, that all who die in infancy are saved by the blood of Christ, and the Inquisitors were especially shocked at the Baptist declaration that the dying babes of Turks and heathen were safe in the arms of Jesus. This doctrine, now so familiar, was a strange one then, and that the Augsburg Confession singles out the Baptists for condemnation as holding it reveals the fact that at that time it was held by the Baptists alone. In an article in "The Presbyterian Review," Doctor Prentiss, of the Union Theological Seminary, recognizes the doctrine of the salvation of all who die in infancy as originally a Baptist tenet.

This Baptist doctrine, that all who die in infancy are saved, has lifted an awful weight from the hearts of the bereaved millions. It has cast white flowers on every little coffin, and when in a missionary meeting is presented the dark view of the hopeless doom of adult heathen dying without knowledge of the Bible, there remains the comforting thought that the vast majority of the ungopeled world, all those who die in infancy, are taken to the arms of Infinite Love. Those two corollaries of the Baptist principle, the two contentions that the church cannot wield the civil sword and that all who die in infancy are saved, have made this world a brighter world than that of Charles V. and Luther and Calvin, or the age of the Westminster divines.

5. And it is in the spirit of their original principle that Baptists have always adhered to independent church government, an ecclesiastical democracy.

It had come to be held in the medieval church not only that through the water of baptism and the bread of the Supper was there exerted a preternatural power, but also that by the imposition of hands in ordination there was bestowed upon the hierarchy a special grace and ability to guide



the church ; wherefore the people were expected to accept, without criticism, the teachings and decrees of their ecclesiastical superiors. But when the Baptists declared that neither in church loaf nor in baptismal water was there any inherent efficacy, they asserted the same of the laying on of hands, and all the members of the church were left on the same level, except so far as to certain ones might be voluntarily accorded the pre-eminence due to admitted superiority in devotion and wisdom. The ecclesiastical official was granted only a moral prelacy.

And this democratic conception was naturally transferred from ecclesiastical to civil affairs. The belief that pope and priest were gifted with a supernatural wisdom had easily suggested the idea that the king too spoke by inspiration of God, and that to question the wisdom of the monarch, or to resist his will, was to rebel against the Almighty. But the doctrine that ecclesiastical officials were not necessarily wise above all others opened the way for the declaration that the people could review the acts and utterances of their political superiors. James I. of England was not in all respects a Solomon, but he showed keen penetration in his favorite aphorism, "No bishop, no

king." The denial of an inspiration imparted through the imposition of hands implied skepticism as to the virtue of the anointing oil and made civil rulers only the equals of the common people, simply a committee with power. It is not merely fortuitous, but by a logical unfolding of their fundamental principle, that Baptists have not only adhered to congregational church government, but have been proverbial as champions of political liberty.

6. Let us glance at one more development of the Baptist principle, namely, the rejection of the use of pouring and sprinkling for baptism.

The act of baptism in the apostolic church was a burial in water; this is the declaration of scholars of all sects, Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Reformed, Anglican, Presbyterian, and Congregational. Luther, in his "Babylonian Captivity," declares of immersion in baptism that "without doubt it was thus instituted by Christ." The Presbyterians ought to listen to John Calvin when he says<sup>1</sup> that the apostolic baptism was immersion; and you, my dear Methodist brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch John

---

<sup>1</sup> "Institutes," Vol. IV., p. 15; "Commentary on Acts," Vol. VIII., p. 38.

Wesley, who declares in his "Journal" (February 21, 1736) that the custom of the first church was immersion. The epistle of Cyprian to Magnus and other early writings show that the practice of affusion was an innovation in the middle of the third century.

And the burial in water remains the standard baptism of the church of all the centuries. It has ever been, and still is, the usage of the Greek Church; it was the practice of the Roman Church down to the thirteenth century, and in England for two hundred years longer, that is, down to the reign of Elizabeth. It is still positively demanded in the ritual of the Church of England, and the Prayer Book of the Episcopal Church in the United States gives it the preference of a prior mention. It was the baptism received not only by Jesus and the apostles, but also by Polycarp and Irenæus, by Augustine and Chrysostom, by Alcuin and Anselm, by Langton and Wycliffe, by Ridley and Latimer, by Cranmer and John Knox. Affusion has come into use only among Western nations, and that only in recent centuries.

Immersion is the only act of baptism recognized as such by all. When pouring or sprinkling was introduced, its validity was at once disputed, and

it has always been denied in the Greek Church. Immersion is the only "catholic" act of baptism, the only one whose validity has been acknowledged *semper et ubique et ab omnibus*.

Immersion alone presents the central Christian doctrine of death and resurrection. On this account it has been preferred even by those who admitted the validity of sprinkling. Says Luther: "I could wish that such as are baptized should be immersed in the water, for it would be beautiful to have so full and perfect a sign of so perfect and full a thing." Pouring or sprinkling, on the other hand, contains nothing whatever that is peculiar to Christianity, for the idea of cleansing is found in Jewish and even heathen ritual. It is immersion alone that is *distinctively* Christian baptism.

These things being so, how came affusion and aspersion ever to be used as baptism? It was because of the rise of the doctrine of baptismal regeneration, the idea that baptism was necessary to salvation. It had come to be believed that one dying unbaptized would be lost; wherefore, when a man was converted in sickness, and normal baptism, the burial in water, was impracticable, there was devised a substitute therefor, a pouring of water over the subject as he lay upon the bed.

But under the principle that one is saved by faith alone, saved before and thus entirely apart from baptism, the Baptists find no difficulty at all in the case of the sick convert. If it be not practicable to administer to him the apostolic rite of immersion, they feel perfectly free to let him die without any water baptism whatever. As for a resort to pouring or sprinkling, which arose from and still involves the idea that something in the shape of baptism is necessary to salvation, it is emphatically forbidden by the Baptist principle that salvation is wrought by the Holy Spirit, entirely apart from all church ceremony.

One sees at a glance how absurd the charge that Baptists "make too much" of baptism. Except the Friends, who discard all water baptism whatever, no Christians make so little of it as do the Baptists. They do not baptize infants; they do not baptize adults when immersion would be unadvisable. There was truth as well as humor in that remark of my friend, your renowned Methodist editor, Dr. James M. Buckley, that the Episcopalians have very few bishops, the Methodists pay very little regard to methods, and the Baptists do very little baptizing!

That Baptists will employ no baptism but im-

mersion does not imply that they ascribe to immersion an overweening importance. If it were proposed to discard immersion, pouring, and sprinkling, all of them together, and that all churches should, like the Society of Friends, dispense with water baptism entirely, the Baptists could entertain that proposition at least as favorably as the Presbyterians or Congregationalists. The Baptists believe, indeed, in immersion, as they believe in a soldier's putting on the prescribed uniform; but as a soldier who has neglected—say culpably neglected—to don the required garb may in spite of this be a good soldier, so they cheerfully recognize that one who has not been immersed may be a true disciple nevertheless.

The special contention of the Baptists is not so much that immersion should be practised as that pouring and sprinkling should be discarded. They condemn the Friends for not being immersed, but not as they condemn the Presbyterians, for the latter not only fail to observe the apostolic ceremony, but they also practise pouring and sprinkling, which usage countenances superstition.

The use of affusion and aspersion for baptism would never have been thought of but for the gross error that baptism was essential to salvation. The

plea for sprinkling still made, even by "evangelical" Christians, that it can be administered when immersion is impossible, is a "survival" of the superstition that it would not do to let a convert die entirely unbaptized. On the other hand, the refusal to practise anything but immersion, a course which may necessitate our allowing a convert to die without any baptism whatever, is the very strongest denial of the doctrine that baptism is essential to salvation, the most emphatic setting forth of the Baptist principle that one is saved apart from baptism and by faith alone.

The great mass of evangelical Christians overlook the fact that the doctrine of salvation without baptism logically demands the rejection of the use of pouring and sprinkling. Not even all Baptists have perceived this. Among the Baptists of Switzerland in the sixteenth century pouring continued to be practised, and the Mennonites of the Netherlands, or, as they call themselves, the *Doopsgezinden*—that is, Baptists—still practise pouring. English Baptists seem to have done the same nearly or quite down to 1640.

How this oversight was possible may be discerned without difficulty. That the rejection of the doctrine of baptismal regeneration demanded

the discontinuance of the baptism of infants was easily apparent to the early Baptists, as it is dawning on the minds of the Presbyterians and Congregationalists of to-day who are so largely abandoning it. The baptism of infants, bringing the whole community into the church, changed its character entirely from that of apostolic times. But the use of pouring, so long as it is employed only in the case of persons already regenerated, does not so pervert the character of the church, and the historical objection to it is liable to be overlooked.

Though the practice of affusion and aspersion originated in the error of baptismal regeneration, and for a thousand years was resorted to only in special cases, there arose a second argument for it, namely, its superior convenience, and this wrought in time the entire supplanting of immersion in the Church of Rome and the Protestant bodies coming from it. The plea may therefore be entered in defense of pouring and sprinkling that, though first resorted to for superstitious reasons, they are now used simply for their convenience, and so have lost their original offensive meaning.

But, as we may object to a semi-profane expression, though we concede that the user "doesn't mean anything by it," so we can condemn pouring



and sprinkling because the resort to them first arose from superstition. In the church Supper the bread and wine may be received kneeling without paying adoration to them, but the rigid Protestant objects to that usage as having originated in the superstition of the Real Presence, and certainly the custom has facilitated in the Church of England an extensive re-introduction of mediæval error. Ceremonies are a "mold of doctrine," and erroneous forms carry within themselves the germs of erroneous beliefs.

Those, then, who maintain that one can be saved without baptism are logically bound to discard the practice of pouring and sprinkling, which originated in the belief that baptism is essential to salvation. Under Roman Catholic or High Church Protestant ideas, pouring and sprinkling are reasonable as necessary to salvation, but under evangelical doctrine they are left no logical place whatever. Therefore the Baptists, though continuing to practise the apostolic immersion, refuse to practise anything else. They say that if immersion is to be discarded it would be better to do like the Friends, and have no water baptism at all.

From the foregoing we can see where run the

lines of separation between the Baptists and their brethren.

The question between Baptists and Roman Catholics or High Church Protestants is, What is the effect of baptism? Both parties hold that the church should consist of regenerate persons, but the latter, believing that one is regenerated in baptism, give the rite to those who make no profession of faith, while the Baptists, regarding the ceremony as merely declarative, administer it only to those who have already been born again.

The question between Baptists and Presbyterians is, Of whom should the church consist? The Presbyterians agree with the Baptist, as against the Romanist, that regeneration is not wrought in baptism, but against the Baptist (and the Romanist also), they declare that the church may properly include unregenerate persons, namely, the unconverted children of believers. The Baptists, however, with a "Say not, We have Abraham to our father," refuse to give baptism except to those who have a faith of their own.

And now we come to the case of the Baptists and the Methodists. They agree as against the Roman Catholic that regeneration is not wrought in baptism, and they agree, as against the Presby-

terian, that the church should be composed only of pious persons, of those who are seeking to "flee from the wrath to come." In this respect the Baptists and the Methodists are one. The Methodist revival of the eighteenth century was on very much the same lines as the Baptist movement of the sixteenth. The two bodies agree as to their fundamental principle, namely, that a man is saved by faith alone, irrespective of baptism. The only question between them is, Which of the two parties has the more logically developed its common doctrine?

The discussion between a Baptist and a Methodist would run something like this: While it is logical for a Roman Catholic to baptize an infant, since he believes that the child will be born again in baptism, is this reasonable for Baptists and Methodists, who scout the idea of baptismal regeneration? If Baptists and Methodists are right in believing that, in regard to salvation through Christ, all infants are alike, the babe of Turk or pagan in the same condition as the child of the Christian, why should they baptize one infant if they do not baptize all? While it is logical for our Presbyterian friends to baptize the offspring of a believer, since they hold that the church

should include not only the pious Eli, but his unregenerate sons also, should Baptists and Methodists baptize, and thus bring into the church those who will grow up impenitent, when they hold that the church should consist only of the converted? If the child is not regenerated in baptism, nor yet made a member of the church, what does the ceremony amount to?

Again, while it is reasonable for the Roman Catholic to use in the place of baptism something besides immersion, which is often impracticable, since he believes that one dying unbaptized is lost, why should Baptists and Methodists practise pouring and sprinkling when they believe that a penitent man will be saved, though dying without baptism? Are the Baptists logical or not in saying that the great principles which they and the Methodists hold in common,—that salvation comes of faith apart from baptism, and that the church should include only converted persons,—bar out the baptism of infants and the use of affusion for baptism? What if I should claim that I am a better Methodist than any of you; that I stand more squarely than you on the doctrine which is the basis of the Methodist as well as the Baptist movement?

I thank you, my dear brethren, for the more than courteous, the kindly, the affectionate reception which you have given to my random talk this afternoon. This has been a sacred hour of Christian union, of holy oneness in Christ so perfect that I have felt emboldened to speak my mind with the extremest frankness. And what does Christian union amount to if it will not enable us to confer with brotherly freedom on the points of difference between us? It will doubtless be some time before Christian men reach full agreement even on important matters. We often, alas, have great trouble in making our brethren see the right! And that infallibility which we deny the pope, we ourselves may lack. Now we know but in part. We are only groping and ever stumbling in our search for truth. But if we are willing to do the will of God we shall yet know his doctrine.

331145

For

## Unfolding of

# Baptist Doctrine

[illegible]